

This Fact Sheet will tell you about:

- Introduction to the Grants Mining District Project
- San Mateo Creek Basin Ground Water Investigation
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- Community Outreach
- Homestake Superfund Site
- Where to Get More Information

GMD Five-Year Plan Participants

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. Department of the Interior
U.S. Department of Energy
U.S. Forest Service
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services –
ATSDR
New Mexico Environment Department
NM Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources
Department - Mining and Mineral Division
Pueblo of Laguna Environmental and Natural
Resources Department

INTRODUCTION

The Grants Mining District is an umbrella project to cover a large area. There are other projects encompassed within this large area, including the Homestake Superfund Site. The Grants Mining District is in the northwestern corner of New Mexico and covers an area of approximately 100 miles by 25 miles. It extends from the Laguna area to near Gallup and includes four mining sub-districts: Ambrosia Lake, Laguna, Marquez and Bernabe Montano. The four sub-districts contain over 100 legacy uranium mines and five former uranium mills where uranium extraction and production operations were conducted from about the mid-1950s to the 1990s. These mining and milling operations resulted in contamination of soil, surface water and ground water within the District. This large project is managed through the implementation of five-year plans developed by several participating federal, state and tribal regulatory agencies.

SAN MATEO CREEK BASIN GROUND WATER INVESTIGATION

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – Region 6 (EPA) and the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) are conducting a ground water investigation in the San Mateo Creek Basin north of Grants as part of the five-year plan. The basin covers approximately 320 square miles and extends from the Ambrosia Lake area in the northwest to the village of San Mateo in the northeast and to the former Anaconda Bluewater and Homestake Mining Company uranium mills to the south near Milan. The purpose of the investigation is to characterize the nature and extent of ground water contamination within the basin. The initial phase of

this work is focused primarily on ground water in the shallow sediments (alluvium) that occur along surface drainages such as creeks and arroyos.

CURRENT STATUS OF GROUND WATER INVESTIGATION

Field sampling activities for the ground water investigation began in early October and are currently ongoing. EPA and its contractors and NMED are conducting this work. It includes sampling of existing ground water monitoring wells and private wells and installing new monitoring wells. EPA contractors will drill boreholes and construct new monitoring wells in the shallow alluvium to depths of approximately 50 to 120 feet. EPA contractors will also be conducting seismic surveys in some areas to help locate favorable

EPA Begins Field Activities to Investigate Ground Water

drilling locations for finding water. The field work is scheduled to continue through mid-December.

Private water wells are being sampled by NMED staff. They are located mostly in the area of the former Homestake and Bluewater uranium mill sites. They were proposed for sampling by the Bluewater Valley Downstream Alliance (BVDA) and Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment (MASE) or requested by individual well owners.

Additional ground water sampling may be performed in 2015 if needed.

Permission to Access Private Land

Over the last six months EPA and NMED have contacted property owners within the basin to obtain permission to enter their land to conduct drilling, seismic and sampling activities or to cross their land to reach other locations where such activities will be conducted. For those property owners that granted EPA permission for access, EPA will notify them in advance of the date(s) the field crews plan to enter their properties.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

A sampling plan prepared by EPA's contractor for the San Mateo Creek Basin Ground Water Investigation will be available for review at EPA's web page (web link shown below) within the next few weeks. It contains a description of the planned field work, laboratory analyses, and maps depicting the location of the seismic surveys, boreholes and new and existing monitoring wells. Additional updates on the progress of the ground water investigation will also be put on the web page periodically.

Once EPA receives the laboratory results, they will be put on the web page and another fact sheet will be sent out to update the public. We expect the results in early spring of 2015. EPA will hold a community meeting to present and discuss the results at that time. In addition, announcements will be sent out in advance of the meeting.

HOMESTAKE SUPERFUND SITE

In September 2014, NMED approved Discharge Permit DP-200 that will allow Homestake to increase the volume of ground water to be treated through doubling of the existing Reverse Osmosis system capacity and construction of a new zeolite treatment system.

EPA is reviewing historic information related to the cleanup being conducted at Homestake under the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC's) authority for license termination. EPA is conducting this review to determine if the NRC-directed clean up would meet EPA's requirements for protectiveness under the Superfund law and allow EPA to delist the site from the National Priorities List (NPL) of Superfund sites once the cleanup is complete. In order to assess if the Superfund requirements are met, EPA plans to determine if the investigation, analysis, and cleanup

are functionally equivalent to the Superfund remedial investigation and feasibility study (RI/FS) process that is performed to support EPA decision-making on site remedies. Performing this process will, among other things, allow EPA to determine if the remedy is protective of human health and the environment and identify all requirements that would have to be met to satisfy the Superfund law and regulations.

If the work performed to date achieves RI/FS equivalency, EPA will issue a Record of Decision (ROD) under its Superfund authority for the existing remedy at the site. If the work does not achieve RI/FS equivalency, EPA intends to have additional RI/FS work performed to achieve equivalency before issuing the ROD on the existing remedy or any other cleanup deemed necessary to meet Superfund requirements. EPA will keep the community informed about the progress of the RI/FS equivalency process and request public comments once the evaluation is complete and before a ROD is issued.

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

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For press inquiries, please call the EPA Press Office, at 214.665.2200

On the web:

http://www.epa.gov/region6/6sf/newmexico/grants/nm_grants_index.html

http://www.epa.gov/region6/6sf/new-mexico/homestake_mining/index.html

Call U.S. EPA at 1.800.533.3508 (toll free) to receive a Spanish translation of this fact sheet.

Para recibir una traducción en español de esta Hoja de Datos, comuníquese con la Agencia de Protección del Medio Ambiente de los EEUU (la EPA) al número de teléfono 1.800.533.3508 (llamada gratis).



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